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**U.S. Representative**

***John Spratt***

South Carolina ■ 5th District

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**News Release**

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## **Spratt Votes for Veterans Health Care Bills**

**WASHINGTON — U.S. Rep. John Spratt this week voted for two veterans health care bills, the “Veterans Benefits Act” and the “Veterans Claims Assistance Act.” Both bills passed the House and were sent to the Senate.**

“These bills,” said Spratt, “are two more steps along the road to an improved health care system for veterans, and I was pleased to support them and vote for them.”

**HR 4850, the Veterans Benefits Act**, increases the rates of disability compensation for veterans with service-connected disabilities. It also increases the rates of dependency and indemnity compensation for survivors of certain disabled veterans.

In addition, the bill categorizes as a service-connected disability a stroke or heart attack suffered by a reservist during inactive-duty training, and it provides a special monthly compensation for a service-connected mastectomy.

**HR 4864, the Veterans Claims Assistance Act**, authorizes the Veterans Affairs Department (VA) to assist claimants in gathering evidence to establish entitlement to a benefit, and requires the VA to make reasonable efforts to obtain records the claimant identifies and authorizes the VA to obtain. Under the bill, claimants no longer have to submit a “well-grounded” claim before the VA can help in gathering evidence.

For service-connected disability claims, the bill requires the VA to obtain service medical and treatment records at no cost to the claimant, and provide a medical exam if there is evidence a disability is service-related. The bill also permits veterans who had claims denied or dismissed to request a review of those claims within a two-year period.

Spratt is considered a leader in the fight for better health care for veterans. This year, he was honored by the South Carolina Disabled American Veterans with the “Veterans First Award.” In presenting the award, the group said: “We appreciate your role as the Ranking Member of the House Budget Committee during the debate over funding for veterans health care. All veterans — and especially those in the 5th Congressional District — deeply appreciate your tireless efforts and constant contact during this crucial debate.”

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